Comment Letter O062

O062

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AUG 3 1 200

HIGH SPEED RAIL COMMITTEE TESTIMONY

HIGH-SPEED RAIL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

I AM HERE TODAY AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MERCED CITY COUNCIL WHO URGES YOU TO CHOOSE THE DIABLO CANYON ROUTE AS THE PREFERRED ROUTE FOR HIGH SPEED RAIL AND THROUGH THE ATWATER MERCED CORRIDER WHICH HAS THE LEAST ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES TO THE PROJECT. O062-1

FURTHERMORE IT IS MY BELIEF THAT THE FORMER BASE IS IDEALLY LOCATED AND AVAILABLE FOR THE HUB THAT WILL BE NEEDED FOR MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OF THE HIGH-SPEED TRAINS. O062-2

AFTER CAREFULLY REVIEWING THE E R, I FEEL CONFIDENT THAT THE DIABLO CANYON ROUTE IS VIABLE, PRACTIBLE AND OBVIOUS TO MANY THE MOST DOABLE ROUTE, NOT TO MENTION ENVIRONMENTALLY AND ECONOMICALLY SOUND. O062-3

WE NEED TO MOVE FORWARD ON THIS PROJECT FOR EVERYDAY THAT WE DELAY THE COST OR MOVING FORWARD INCREASES. FURTHER LET ME SAY THERE WILL BE A HIGHSPEED RAIL SYSTEM IN CALIFORNIA THE QUESTION IS WILL WE BE ON THE THAT TRAIN OR WILL OUR CHILDRENS CHILDREN BE ON THAT TRAIN. THE COST OF DELAY NOT ONLY IINHIBITS EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITES, ALTERNATIVIE TRANSPORTATION OPPORTUNITIES BUT ENVIRONMENTAL OPPORTUNIES TO IMPROVE THE AIR QUALITY OF OUR VALLEY.

ONCE AGAIN I EMPHASIZE THE SELECTION OF THE DIABLO CANYON ROUTE AS THE MOST VIABLE AND PRACTICLE AND NATUALLY THE ATWATER- MERCED CORRIDOR AS THE NUMBER ONE CHOICE FOR THE TRANSPORTATION HUB AND MAINTENANCE FACILITY.

SUBMITTED,

RICK OSORIO
MERCED CITY COUNCIL

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Response to Comments of Rick Osorio, Merced City Council, Osorio Financial, August 31, 2004 (Letter O062)

O062-01

Acknowledged. See standard response 6.3.1.

O062-02

Acknowledged. See standard response 6.19.1.

O062-03

Acknowledged. See standard response 6.3.1.

Comment Letter O063

O063

PACIFIC FRIENDS OUTREACH SOCIETY

Quaker Oaks Farm

"A Friendly Gathering Place"

RECEIVED
AUG 31 2004

August 30, 2004

California High-Speed Rail Authority
925 L Street Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Sirs and Madams:

On August 28, 2004, the Board of Directors of Pacific Friends Outreach Society approved the following Minute:

08-04-5 **The PFOS Board joins with the Chamber of Commerce, VEDC, and City of Visalia in supporting High Speed Rail in California. We agree that the alignment should run through Tulare County with a station near the Highway 99/198 intersection.** O063-1

Pacific Friends Outreach Society is a 501(c)(3) non profit organization incorporated for the purpose of developing and operating an educational and retreat center open to the public in which to demonstrate the Quaker values of peace, simplicity, integrity, community, unity, and equality. Organic produce will be grown and served on site demonstrating a model of sustainable agricultural practices. The facility will be developed and operated using principals of universal design thus assuring the widest accessibility for disabled persons.

High-speed rail service near this project will both enhance access to this facility from many parts of the state and reduce the environmental damage caused by the increasing vehicular traffic through the valley.

Thank you,

Sharlene F. Roberts-Caudle, J.D., LL.M.
Executive Director to the Board
Pacific Friends Outreach Society

Cc: Visalia Chamber of Commerce
Visalia Economic Development Corporation
City of Visalia

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Response to Comments of Sharlene F. Roberts-Caudle, Executive Director, Pacific Friends Outreach Society, August 31, 2004 (Letter O063)

O063-01

Please see standard response 6.15.4 and standard response 6.21.1.

Comment Letter O064

O064

Rancho Bernardo Community Planning Board
15721 Bernardo Heights Parkway, Suite B-230
San Diego, CA 92128

August 30, 2004

Attn: California High-Speed Train
Draft Program EIR/EIS Comments
925 L Street, Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Comments Regarding the Adequacy of the draft Program EIR/EIS for the Proposed California High-Speed Rail System

Dear Mr. Leavitt and Mr. Valenstein:

The Rancho Bernardo Community Planning Board, a City of San Diego recognized community planning group, has reviewed the Program EIR/EIS for the Proposed California High-Speed Rail System and finds that the draft, as currently prepared, does not adequately address the environmental consequences of the proposed project, nor does it address a reasonable range of project alternatives. In addition, the project description and impact analysis do not provide adequate information to allow the public or the decisionmakers to fully comprehend the scope of the proposal. We believe that the document, as currently prepared, is seriously flawed, both in its evaluation of impacts and in its discussion of feasible mitigation. We therefore request that the document be revised to incorporate an adequate analysis of the issues presented below.

Alternatives

The Council on Environmental Quality NEPA Regulations describe the alternatives section as the heart of the EIS. As such, the alternatives presented in an EIS should be reasonable and implementable, must be given equal treatment, and must provide clear choices for the decisionmaker.

Similarly, the CEQA Guidelines in Section 15126.6 state that an EIR shall consider a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives that will foster informed decisionmaking and public participation. Because an EIR must identify ways to mitigate or avoid the significant effects that a project may have on the environment (Public Resources Code Section 21002.1), the discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the project or its location which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives, or would be more costly.

O064-1

This program EIR/EIS fails to consider an adequate range of alternatives. For a project of this magnitude, there are clearly additional alternatives that must be evaluated, including alternative routes, alternative technologies, and alternative designs for achieving the purpose and needs of the project. The Rancho Bernardo Community Planning Board requests that the discussion of alternatives include

an alternative system design in which the high-speed rail system would only be constructed to the edges of the State's major metropolitan areas, rather than extending through them. Under this alternative, passengers could still move quickly from one city to another, but rather than traveling directly to the center of the city, the trains would stop at an appropriate transit center at the outskirts of the city, allowing passengers to travel to their final destination via a variety of existing or new, less costly feeder transit lines, including trolleys, buses, and other existing rail lines. The implementation of such an alternative would substantially reduce the significant, unmitigated adverse effects of the proposed project on community character and visual quality and would avoid additional noise, vibration, and traffic congestion impacts within existing communities.

A specific example of why such an alternative should be considered is that fact that under the current proposal the high-speed rail line would be constructed all the way into the center of the City of San Diego. However, the construction of the line from Escondido south into San Diego would simply replicate SANDAG's current Transit First plans for mass transit in the I-15 corridor. An alternative should be developed that would tie the proposed high-speed rail project into existing and planned transit systems, rather than trying to overlay a redundant service on top of currently planned local projects. If travelers were to take the high-speed train to the Bay Area, wouldn't they transfer from the larger system onto BART when they reached one of the BART transfer stations? Why would this project need to duplicate existing opportunities on the BART? The same is true for the I-15 corridor into the City of San Diego. Wouldn't it be more reasonable, (with less cost and fewer impacts), to take the high-speed rail system south into the Escondido Transit Center, and at that point transfer onto SANDAG's Transit First system, which would provide more convenient access to communities along I-15 corridor and into the center of the city of San Diego? As stated above, we believe that such an alternative would not only be more cost effective, but it could achieve the same project objectives with far fewer significant, adverse impacts to existing communities and the environment.

O064-1 cont.

Project Description

Section 15124 of the CEQA Guidelines requires an EIR to describe a proposed project in a way that will be meaningful to the public and to the decisionmakers. Unfortunately, this document is so general that it is not possible for the affected community members or the decisionmakers to grasp the magnitude of the impacts that could result from the implementation of this project. Although this is a program EIR/EIS that covers the entire state, significantly more effort should have been made in describing how the system would be implemented within each community. It is apparent that little thought was given regarding how this facility would be constructed within various communities. For instance, within the portion of the I-15 corridor that extends from Lake Hodges to Mira Mesa in San Diego County, no right-of-way will be available for new facilities once the current freeway improvements are completed. That will require the development of an elevated rail line through this entire section of San Diego. Specifics regarding the height and design of the structures, how views could be altered or blocked, how the required construction would be accommodated within already overcrowded transportation corridors, and the effects of construction on existing traffic circulation are not provided at an appropriate level of detail to afford meaningful consideration of environmental consequences.

O064-2 cont.

Comment Letter O064 Continued

Draft Program EIR/EIS Comments
August 30, 2004
Page 3 of 5

Existing Conditions/Project Setting

The discussion of existing conditions is extremely generic in nature and does not provide adequate information to allow for a comprehensive analysis of environmental consequences, even at the programmatic level. This is particularly true with respect to aesthetics and visual resources, noise and vibration, traffic and circulation, and biological resources. Where descriptions are provided for the segment between March Air Base and Mira Mesa, they are generally inaccurate. For instance, the local street system along the I-15 corridor in northern San Diego is described as being constructed in a grid pattern. Due to the existing topography in northern San Diego, which consists of a series of canyons and mesas, no such grid pattern exists. On the contrary, relatively few parallel arterial roadways exist in this area, making traffic congestion on our local freeways that much more significant. O064-3

The document also fails to describe the proximity of residential development to the existing freeway corridor, the existing visual amenities within the corridor that could be impacted, and the significant open space areas, such as the Lake Hodges/San Pasqual Valley area and Los Penasquitos Canyon, that would have to be crossed by an elevated rail line.

Descriptions of other existing and planned transit projects in the vicinity of the proposed project have been omitted and an explanation of how the high-speed rail system would interaction with these other transit programs should be provided.

Environmental Consequences

Once again, the anticipated impacts of the project are generic in nature and do not adequately address the magnitude of the impacts that could occur along various portions of the alignment. The CEQA Guidelines state that a program EIR will be most helpful in dealing with subsequent activities if it deals with the effects of the program as specifically and comprehensively as possible. The content of this document is neither specific nor comprehensive, and as a result, the document should be revised to provide a meaningful description of potential project impacts and associated mitigation measures.

Specifically, the discussion of aesthetics and visual resources fails to take into consideration the surrounding topography when addressing the potential effects of an elevated rail through a community. Little if any analysis of impacts to existing community character is presented, yet the impacts to a community such as Rancho Bernardo would be significant due to the high visibility of an elevated rail line passing through the center of the community. If the rail line were to be elevated between Rancho Bernardo Road and Bernardo Center Drive, it would be visible from a substantial portion of the community and the elevation would be so much higher than the surrounding area that it would not be possible to screen the facility. Because of these conditions, the draft EIR/EIS should have determined that in this portion of the corridor, impacts related to community character and visual quality would be significant and unmitigable. O064-4

Draft Program EIR/EIS Comments
August 30, 2004
Page 4 of 5

As currently prepared, the document fails to disclose the anticipated noise impacts to sensitive receptors along the proposed alignment, particularly in areas where the system would be elevated. The document should clearly describe the incremental noise impacts generated by 120+ mph trains, traveling in both directions, at a frequency of every ten minutes in such locations. The current analysis seems to assume that because noise levels are already high along the I-15 corridor that additional noise can be generated within the corridor without creating new impacts. This is clearly not the case, particularly where the line would be elevated.

It is likely that there are numerous locations along the route where elevating the line would actually place the trains closer to sensitive receptors than they would be if they were constructed at grade. This is clearly the case along the I-15 corridor between Lake Hodges and Mira Mesa. For instance, within the I-15 corridor in the vicinity of Rancho Bernardo, elevating the rail line would place the train at elevations similar to the adjacent homes, which are situated above the existing freeway. The draft EIR/EIS implies that all such noise impacts can be mitigated. How would noise impacts be realistically mitigated in situations such as those in I-15 corridor where the elevations are too high to construct sound walls or other noise reducing structures? O064-5

A comprehensive noise analysis should be conducted that takes into consideration the existing elevations of sensitive receptors and the proximity of the line to these receptors, as well as the existing and future noise levels generated from within the I-15 corridor. Further, the cumulative effects of all of the uses within the corridor on adjacent sensitive receptors should be considered.

Too few visual simulation overlays have been provided in the draft EIR/EIS. As a result, none of the examples are representative of the current or planned conditions within the I-15 corridor between Lake Hodges and Mira Mesa. The photographs that are provided give the impression that there is sufficient space to easily insert the high-speed rail lines into the existing freeway right-of-way. These photographs are misleading and do not accurately depict the effects of the project on the surrounding area. The document should include photo simulations that accurately describe how the rail system would realistically fit into the I-15 corridor once the Managed Lanes project is completed. O064-6

The potential effects of existing soil problems along the corridor are also inadequately addressed. What could be the effects of increased vibration in areas with known soil problems? For example, in Rancho Bernardo there are ancient landslides present along both sides of I-15. O064-7

Mitigation Measures

The discussion of mitigation is extremely generic, with no discussion of how effective specific mitigation measures would be in specific situations. The EIR/EIS should be revised to address specific conditions that would be experienced along the route and incorporate realistic and feasible mitigation measures that would reduce anticipated impacts to below a level of significance. The document should also clearly identify those significant impacts that cannot be mitigated. For example, the visual impacts of constructing an elevated line between Rancho Bernardo Road and Bernardo Center Drive in Rancho Bernardo would be significant and unmitigable. O064-8

Comment Letter O064 Continued

Project Feasibility

No discussion is provided regarding how rail lines can be accommodate within the footprint of existing transportation corridors. There are steep grades on I-15 through Rancho Bernardo and numerous overpasses and on and off ramps. Can the rail line be elevated above all of these structures? What would that height be? These are only some of the questions that have not been addressed in the draft EIR/EIS with respect to the feasibility. Another important question is whether the mitigation measures suggested in the document are actually feasible and if so, would they be effective in reducing impacts to below a level of significance.

O064-9

The Rancho Bernardo Community Planning Board believes that there are feasible alternatives to the current proposal that have not been adequately addressed. Alternative designs, such as the one proposed earlier in this letter, would significantly reduce the adverse affects of the project on those communities located along the I-15 corridor in the San Diego region. We respectfully request that additional alternatives be developed and incorporated into a revised draft EIR/EIS. In addition, we request that a more comprehensive analysis of potential impacts to completed in order to provide the public and the decisionmakers with a complete understanding of the consequences to existing communities and the natural environmental of implementing the proposed project.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide comments and request that we be kept informed of future actions associated with this proposal.

Sincerely,

Victoria Touchstone, Corresponding Secretary
for Jim Denton, Planning Board Chairman

cc: Brian Maienschein, San Diego City Council, District 5
Assemblyman George Plescia
State Capitol Building, Room 4009 Sacramento, CA 94249-0075;
San Diego District Office, 9909 Mira Mesa Blvd., Suite 130, San Diego, CA 92131

Response to Comments of Victoria Touchstone, Corresponding Secretary, for Jim Denton, Planning Board Chairman, Rancho Bernardo Community Planning Board, August 31, 2004 (Letter O064)

O064-01

The primary purpose of the HST system is to link the major metropolitan areas of the state. The Authority, and the FRA do not believe that an HST system which terminates in the outskirts of major cities (such as Escondido) would adequately serve metropolitan regions (such as the San Diego metropolitan region). SANDAG, NCTD, MTDB, Caltrans District 11 and the City of San Diego all agree that a statewide HST system must directly serve downtown San Diego. HST ridership potential is highly dependent on the total trip time and the number of transfers. Ridership forecasts estimated a 25% decrease in ridership for a HST system between Los Angeles Union Station (LAUS) to Pleasanton BART as compared to a HST system between LAUS and downtown San Francisco (page 4-20, "High Speed Rail Summary Report and Action Plan", December 1996). HST service to the downtowns of major cities such as San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose, Los Angeles and San Diego and to major airports greatly increase the connectivity and accessibility of the HST system, and enable the system to directly serve major regional transit hubs such as the San Francisco Transbay Terminal, San Jose Diridon Station, Oakland Airport, San Francisco International Airport (SFO), Los Angeles Union Station and the Downtown San Diego Santa Fe Depot. Local services such as BART have many stops and in the case of BART do not permit express services. If the HST system terminated in locations on the outskirts of the major metropolitan areas (such as Escondido), air transportation would be considerably more accessible to intercity passengers than HST service and the HST system would not be competitive with either air transportation or automobile modes in regards to total travel times.

O064-02

The Authority and FRA respectfully disagree with your assessment. The alternatives have been designed at a conceptual level of detail that is appropriate with a program level analysis. For the HST alternative, typical sections have been provided which show design assumptions for each segment (please see the "Alignment Configuration and Cross Sections" technical report, January 2004). For the HST alignment along the I-15 corridor between Lake Hodges and Mira Mesa, the environmental analysis at a program level of detail is based on the assumption that the HST system would be on an aerial structure adjacent to the freeway. Should the HST proposal move forward, more detailed preliminary engineering design would be required as part of future project-specific studies.

O064-03

Please see response to Comment 3.15.2 regarding the general level of detail in this PEIR/S and the anticipated more detailed project-level, Tier 2 studies. Please see response to Comment O042-1 for more information on the purpose of the PEIR/S and the subsequent studies. See Chapter 3 of the Final Program EIR/EIS for additional information on construction methods (Section 3.18) and additional information on mitigation strategies and "design practices". Impacts to visual resources, noise and vibration, traffic and circulation and biological resources are dependent on specific and precise information regarding location and design of the facilities proposed, as well as the specific operating characteristics (e.g., elevated, at-grade, catenary design features, fencing type and location, speed, etc.), which will be addressed during the subsequent project level environmental review. The detail of engineering associated with the project level environmental analysis will allow the Authority to further investigate ways to avoid, minimize and mitigate potential visual affects. After the alignment is refined and the facilities are

fully defined through project level analysis, and avoidance and minimization efforts have been exhausted, specific impacts and mitigation measures will be addressed.

The descriptions of existing conditions along the I-15 corridor have been revised in the Final EIR/EIS to better reflect the existing transportation system and land uses in the area.

O064-04

Visual impacts are highly site-specific in nature. These issues will be addressed in greater detail during subsequent project level environmental review, based on more precise information regarding location and design of the facilities proposed (e.g., elevated, at-grade, catenary design features, fencing type and location, etc.). The detail of engineering associated with the project level environmental analysis will allow the Authority to further investigate ways to avoid, minimize and mitigate potential visual affects. Only after the alignment is refined and the facilities are fully defined through project level analysis, and avoidance and minimization efforts have been exhausted, will specific impacts and mitigation measures be addressed.

The assessment of level of potential impacts between Rancho Bernardo Road and Bernardo Center Drive has been revised in the Final Program EIR/EIS to reflect the existing and future land uses and high visibility of the proposed HST alignment option; however, the potential impacts of specific alignments must be considered in more detailed definition and analysis at the project-level of study, when more specific findings will also be made. See Section 3.9.

O064-05

Please see response AL072 – 12 regarding the program level noise assessment.

Regarding noise mitigation for elevated sections of HST alignment, several options would be considered ranging from shifting the alignment as far away from sensitive receptors as possible to placement of relatively low sound barriers on the elevated structure.

O064-06

Acknowledged. Visual simulations are provided for illustration of representative scenarios in the Program EIR/EIS, but are not required; the ones already included in the Program EIR/EIS can be considered conceptual renderings. It may be appropriate to include additional simulations at the project-level when specific facilities and alignments are being analyzed. Please see the "Alignment Configuration and Cross Sections" technical report for schematic renderings of typical sections.

O064-07

Specific geotechnical constraints and issues will be addressed during subsequent project level environmental review, based on more precise information regarding location and design of the facilities proposed, the construction and operation activities that are likely to occur in a given area of concern, and the specific geologic and soil conditions in proximity to the proposed facility. The detail of engineering and the level of geologic exploration developed in project level environmental analysis will allow the Authority to further investigate ways to avoid, minimize and mitigate potential impacts.

O064-08

Specific impacts and mitigation measures will be addressed during subsequent project level environmental review, based on more precise information regarding location and design of the facilities proposed (e.g., specific alignment, right of way corridor width, elevated, at-grade, cuts and fills, etc.). The detail of engineering associated with the project level environmental analysis will allow the Authority to further investigate ways to avoid, minimize and mitigate potential impacts. Only after the alignment is refined and the facilities are fully defined through project level analysis, and avoidance and minimization efforts have been exhausted, will specific impacts and mitigation measures be addressed. However, general mitigation strategies can be defined at the program level of analysis and each environmental area (sections of Chapter 3) in the

Final Program EIR/EIS has been modified to include mitigation strategies that would be applied in general for the HST system. Each section of Chapter 3 also outlines specific design features that will be applied to the implementation of the HST system to avoid, minimize, and mitigate potential impacts.

O064-09

The alignment options considered for this segment of the HST system meet the established engineering criteria (Engineering Criteria, 2004). Please also see response to Comment O064-08.

Mitigation strategies mentioned in the Program EIR/EIS have been applied successfully on other similar projects and would be refined through design and review with the appropriate federal, state and local agencies to be applicable to specific features and placement for each segment of the HST system.

Alternative configurations would be considered as part of the subsequent project level environmental review, as more specificity is defined for proposed alignments and facilities.

Comment Letter O065

O065

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August 31, 2004

Dan Leavitt
Deputy Director
California High Speed Rail Authority
VIA FAX 916-322-0827

Re: California High Speed Train System Draft EIR/EIS

We are pleased to submit a few comments on the Draft EIR/EIS. SPUR believes that California needs a high speed rail project to be completed, for both economic and environmental reasons. However, we believe the design of the route and, in particular, the design and siting of the stations, will determine whether the environmental harms or environmental benefits are greater.

We believe that the EIR/EIS should more thoroughly analyze station location and route options at the community level. Many of the most significant environmental impacts will take place as a result of the land use response to the high speed rail system. To the degree that stations are located within the centers of existing towns, high speed rail will reinforce center-oriented land use patterns in the State; to the degree that stations are located on cheaper land "bypass" alignments, high speed rail will, in fact, stimulate sprawl throughout the state and do more environmental damage than good. While the High Speed Rail Authority does not have land use authority, it is responsible for the route selection and station location. This issue is central to the environmental impacts the project may have. O065-1

Closely related to the development response to High Speed Rail is the question of station access planning. The Authority needs to take responsibility for planning this dimension of the network. What will the mode split be to and from the stations, and what can be done to minimize the mode share of driving? Again, this question is central to the overall environmental harm/benefit equation of the project.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Metcalf
Deputy Director

Macintosh HD:Documents:Region High Speed Rail:SPUR on HSR EIR 8.31.04.doc

Response to Comments of Gabriel Metcalf, Deputy Director, San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR), August 31, 2004 (Letter O065)

O065-01

Please see Standard Responses 2.1.12 and 2.31.4. The station sites identified as preferred locations are all multi-modal transportation hubs that would provide links with local and regional transit, airports and highways. It is assumed that parking at the stations would be provided at market rates (no free parking). Each station site would have the potential to promote higher density, mixed-use, pedestrian oriented development around the station. As the project proceeds to more detailed study, local government would be expected to provide for transit-oriented development around HST station locations (through planning and zoning), and to finance (e.g., through value capture or other financing techniques) and to maintain the public spaces needed to support the pedestrian traffic generated by hub stations if they are to have a HST station.

Should the HST proposal move forward, station locations and alignments will be analyzed in site-specific detail as part of future project specific studies.

Objectives of the HST system are to "maximize the use of existing transportation corridors and right-of-way, to the extent feasible" and "maximize intermodal transportation opportunities by locating stations to connect with local transit, airports, and highways (please see Draft Program EIR/EIS, page 1-4).

Although assumptions were made in order to define potential parking impacts, it is beyond the scope of a program level document to know precisely the mode split to and from stations. The assumptions varied from 20% of passengers using private automobiles (i.e. San Francisco) to 80% using private automobiles (i.e. Los Banos). Please see Appendix 1, Bakersfield-to-Los Angeles Traffic, Transit, Circulation & Parking Technical Evaluation for more details. The Authority believes that the best way of minimizing the mode share of driving is to 1) select multi-modal hub station locations for HST stations; 2) require cities to promote transit oriented development around HST stations if they are to have a station; 3) provide market rate parking at stations; and 4) support improvements to local and regional transit systems. These issues would be further investigated should the HST proposal move forward as part of future studies.

Comment Letter O066

O066

Lydia Miller, President
San Joaquin Raptor/Wildlife Rescue Center
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Mr. Joe Petrillo
Chair
California High Speed Rail Authority
925 L St., Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814
Fax: (916) 322-0827

August 31, 2004

Via facsimile

RECEIVED
AUG 31 2004

Re: Comments on the California High Speed Rail Draft Program EIR/EIS

Dear Mr. Petrillo:

The DEIR/DEIS is flawed in part because it fails to adequately address, inter alia:

- The possibility of an Altamont Pass alignment as an alternative to tunneling through the more mountainous Mt. Hamilton and Pacheco Pass areas to connect the Central Valley to the Bay Area. The Altamont Pass alignment was the recommended preferred alignment of the Intercity High Speed Rail Commission, the predecessor to the California High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA).
- Growth-inducing impacts
- Impacts on numerous wildlife/habitat conservation projects, including those with partnerships with the state and federal government
- Generation and conveyance of project power, and related impacts
- Impacts to wildlife movement corridors
- Impacts from maintenance facilities

O066-1

This project, and its review, points out the need to have in place a state-wide mitigation program to address the impacts of loss of agricultural land.

Please consider this a written request to inform our groups of all subsequent steps in the environmental review process, and provide the associated information.

Sincerely,

Lydia Miller Steve Burke

Lydia Miller Steve Burke

Cc: Interested parties

1

Response to Comments of Lydia Miller and Steve Burke, San Joaquin Raptor/Widlife Rescue Center and Protect Our Water, August 31, 2004 (Letter O066)

O066-01

Please see standard response 2.18.1 in regards to study of the Altamont Pass. Please Chapter 5 of the Program EIR/EIS in regards to potential growth inducing impacts and standard responses 5.2.1 through 5.2.6. Please see standard response 3.15.10 in regards to impacts on wildlife/habitat conservation projects, and 3.15.13 in regards to the level of detail of the Program EIR/EIS. Please see Section 3.5 of the Program EIR/EIS and standard response 3.5.3 in regards to conveyance of project power and related impacts. Please see Section 3.15.3B of the Final Program EIR/EIS and standard response 3.15.3 and standard response 3.15.9 in regards to wildlife movement corridors. Please see Section 2.6.10 "Maintenance and Storage Facilities" of the Final Program EIR/EIS for the maintenance and storage facilities assumptions used for this program EIR/EIS process.